

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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FM AMEMBASSY PARIS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3789

SECDEF WASHDC

INFO AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY BONN

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USMISSION NATO

USNMR SHAPE

C O N F I D E N T I A L PARIS 25705

USNMR/SHAPE FOR GENERAL HAIG

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: OVIP (SCHLESINGER, JAMES), PFOR, FR

SUBJECT: SECDEF VISIT TO FRANCE: GOF REACTION TO VISIT

1. BEGIN SUMMARY: GOF, AT EVERY LEVEL, SEEMS QUITE PLEASED WITH SECRETARY SCHLESINGER'S VISIT. FRENCH HOPE FRANCO-AMERICAN POL/MIL DIALOGUE WILL BUILD ON THIS SOLID FOUNDATION. END SUMMARY.

2. REACTION OF GOVERNMENT OF FRANCE OFFICIALS TO SECDEF VISIT, AS REFLECTED BY COMMENTS TO US FROM ELYSEE, QUAI, AND MOD STAFFERS CONFIRMS OUR OWN OBSERVATION THAT SECRETARY SCHLESINGER'S VISIT WAS VERY SUCCESSFUL FROM FRENCH POINT OF VIEW. FRENCH OFFICIALS WERE PARTICULARLY STRUCK BY "PRUDENCE" REFLECTED IN SECDEF'S REMARKS CONCERNING MBFR. WHILE THIS DOES NOT ALLAY THEIR FEARS ABOUT POSSIBLE OUTCOMES OF MBFR, WE THINK FRENCH HAVE A GOOD DEAL MORE CONFIDENCE THAT SECDEF UNDERSTANDS FRENCH CONCERN THAT LONG-TERM EUROPEAN SECURITY INTERESTS NOT BE SACRIFICED TO NEGOTIATING PROCESS SET IN MOTION

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IN VIENNA. FRENCH WERE ALSO PLEASED (AND FLATTERED) BY

SECDEF'S PUBLIC AND PRIVATE COMMENTS TO THEM CONCERNING FRENCH NUCLEAR FORCES. MOREOVER, FRENCH, PARTICULARLY GISCARD, WERE IMPRESSED BY INTELLECTUAL COMMAND AND ARTICULATENESS OF SECDEF. FINALLY, ALL OUR CONTACTS UNDERLINED GOF SATISFACTION WITH THE WAY SECDEF HANDLED SERIES OF POLITICALLY TRICKY QUESTIONS THROUGHOUT VISIT, AND PARTICULARLY IN COURSE OF OCTOBER 1 PRESS CONFERENCE. FOR EXAMPLE, AN ELYSEE SOURCE TOLD US THAT SECDEF'S STATEMENTS TO THE PRESS WERE "JUST RIGHT" FROM THE POINT OF VIEW OF FRENCH INTERNAL POLITICAL SENSITIVITIES. SAME SOURCE WENT ON TO SAY THAT SECDEF'S COMMENTS HAD BEEN VERY HELPFUL IN FOCUSING GISCARD'S OWN THINKING CONCERNING FRENCH DEFENSE POLICY.

2. EMBASSY COMMENT: WE DO NOT WISH TO EXAGGERATE POSITIVE FRENCH REACTION TO SECDEF VISIT. FRENCH ARE UNLIKELY TO MAKE FUNDAMENTAL CHANGES IN THEIR DEFENSE STRATEGY SOLELY ON THE BASIS OF THIS ONE VISIT. HOWEVER, WE ARE PERSUADED THAT FRENCH VIEW SECRETARY SCHLESINGER AS "A MAN WE CAN DO BUSINESS WITH," AND THEY ARE PREPARED TO TEST THE PARAMETERS OF FUTURE FRANCO-AMERICAN COOPERATION IN POLITICAL/MILITARY AFFAIRS. WITHOUT MINIMIZING THE DIFFICULTIES THAT LIE AHEAD, FRENCH REACTION SO FAR SUGGESTS THAT WE HAVE EVERY REASON TO EXPECT THAT COMING MONTHS WILL PROVIDE THE OPPORTUNITY FOR THE MOST FRUITFUL DEFENSE DIALOGUE WITH THE FRENCH IN AT LEAST A DECADE. SEEN IN THIS OPTIC, WE BELIEVE THAT THE SECRETARY'S VISIT WAS TOTALLY SUCCESSFUL AND IT HAS LAID THE FOUNDATION FOR THE TYPE OF "PRAGMATIC" COOPERATION BETWEEN OUR TWO COUNTRIES THAT HAS BEEN SOUGHT BY GISCARD. WE WILL, HOWEVER, WANT TO PROCEED CAUTIOUSLY AND CONFIDENTIALLY SO AS TO AVOID CRUSHING THIS NEW FRENCH ATTITUDE OF COOPERATION IN AN OVER-EXUBERANT EMBRACE.
RUSH

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